

# **Performance Metrics for the Integrated Marketing and Communications Campaign**

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### **Abstract**

Measuring the success of communications, especially communications to effect behavioral changes, presents a unique challenge. Evaluations of the Census 2000 integrated partnership and marketing campaign suggested a successful effort – the decline since 1970 in the mail response rate was reversed; and the total and differential undercounts dropped substantially. This paper examines evaluation strategies for other government campaigns – military recruiting and the anti-drug campaign -- to see if their recent experiences might be useful in informing evaluation plans for the 2010 communications campaign.

### **Questions for Committee**

- 1) Should the evaluations done for 2000 (surveys of attitudes and intention and modeling) be repeated for 2010?
- 2) Is the measurement of factors that lead to behavior (awareness, attitude, intention) adequate as an evaluation strategy?
- 3) If not, what other options are there?
- 4) Are there additional measures related to specific campaign tactics that should be considered?

**Disclaimer.** This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing work and to encourage discussion of issues related to the project. The views expressed on methodological issues are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Background

The paid advertising campaign in support of Census 2000 was a first-time effort and was generally seen as highly successful. Along with an ambitious partnership effort, the Partnership and Marketing Program was considered to have played a major role in raising the mail response rate from an expected 61percent to 67percent. Quantifying that relationship proved to be difficult. An independent evaluation<sup>1</sup> as well as a sophisticated model created to examine the effects of partnership and marketing on response<sup>2</sup> failed to demonstrate the expected relationship. In the world of social marketing, this outcome is not unusual.

As we prepare for the 2010 Census Communications Campaign, we must decide 1) how to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall campaign, and 2) how to assess the performance of the Contractor.

## Goals

The Census Bureau in 2010 will make every effort to improve the accuracy of census coverage by enumerating each household and person. The overall communications strategy must support the following goals:

- Increase mail response
- Improve cooperation with enumerators
- Improve accuracy/ reduce the differential undercount

Each of these goals is measurable but making the connection to communications will be difficult.

## The Experience of Other Government Advertisers

The 2010 Census Communications Campaign will encompass advertising, public relations, grassroots efforts, etc. For the purposes of this discussion, we looked at other advertising campaigns, recognizing that measurement issues may differ somewhat for advertising-only campaigns.

The question of how best to evaluate advertising has been examined by Rand, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for military recruitment advertising and by GAO for the anti-drug campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> Census 2000 Topic Report No. 6, *Evaluations of the Census 2000 Partnership and Marketing Program*, February 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Bentley, Michael, *Evaluation of Partnership and Marketing on Improving Census 2000 Mail Return Rates*, April, 2003.

## Military recruitment

In 2003, GAO studied the adequacy of measures that the Department of Defense (DOD) used to evaluate advertising effectiveness. GAO recommended “DOD set clear, measurable advertising objectives; develop outcome measures to evaluate advertising programs’ performance; and use these measures to monitor advertising’s performance and make choices on recruiting investments.”<sup>3</sup> In response, DOD turned to the National Academy of Sciences to develop an advertising strategic framework.<sup>4</sup> The National Academy of Sciences’ recommended framework recognizes that different research designs should be used to answer different types of research questions, or to address different measures of success. A version of their framework, adapted for the census, is shown below:

### Evaluation Framework

	Outcome Not Specified A Priori	Specific Attitudes or Behavioral Intentions	Actual Behavior
Question	“What does a target audience see as attractive or unattractive features of a campaign?”	“What is the effect of the campaign on specified attitudes or behavioral intentions?”	“What is the effect of the campaign on response to the census?”
Method	Focus groups; unstructured or open-ended surveys and interviews	Surveys; quasi-experiments	Surveys; quasi-experiments; modeling

If the Census Bureau were to use this framework, we would measure effectiveness based on:

- 1) the effectiveness of the messages or creative concepts (through focus groups or interviews),
- 2) increases in awareness (measured by surveys),
- 3) changes in attitudes (measured by surveys), and

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<sup>3</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services. *Military Recruiting DOD Needs to Establish Objectives and Measures to Better Evaluate Advertising’s Effectiveness*. GAO-03-1005, September 2003.

<sup>4</sup> National Research Council. *Evaluating Military Advertising and Recruiting: Theory and Methodology*. Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment—Phase II. Paul R. Sackett and Anne S. Mayer, editors. Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

- 4) increases in the intention to respond and actual response (measured by quasi-experiments/models).

### The Anti-Drug Campaign

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), has the goal of preventing drug use among the nation's youth. Westat, Inc., under the auspices of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), evaluated the campaign and found, according to the GAO, "no significant favorable effects of campaign exposure on marijuana initiation among non-drug-using youth or cessation and declining use among prior marijuana users."<sup>5</sup> Although GAO found Westat's analysis to be sound, ONDCP pointed out a number of difficulties associated with proving a causal relationship between advertising and behavior.

ONDCP has modified its program goals to include:

- 1) Increase awareness
- 2) Improve attitudes
- 3) Change intentions
- 4) Improve management (implement improved communications, training, best practices, reviews, and quality controls)

### **Implications for Census**

In the draft Request for Proposals for the 2010 Census Communications contract, we suggested evaluating the extent to which the communications campaign moves people toward the goal of responding to the census. This might consist of measuring the effectiveness of specific messages for target audiences (copy research), measuring increases in awareness of the census and changes in attitudes toward the census (survey research), and measuring changes in intention to return the census form and actual return of the form (survey research; modeling). These are general measures of effectiveness, and when used together, provide a good indication of how well a campaign does in support of the overall objectives.

The Contractor's first assignment will be to develop a research-based national communications campaign plan. As part of that task, the Contractor will recommend specific campaign strategies and tactics. The Census Bureau will develop specific

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<sup>5</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U. S. Senate. *ONDCP Media Campaign Contractor's National Evaluation Did Not Find That the Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign Was Effective in Reducing Youth Drug Use*. GAO-06-818, August 2006.

additional performance measures based on the type of campaign developed. For example, a campaign that uses advertising heavily might be evaluated based on such measures as reach and frequency, or recall of messages. A campaign that is built around grassroots Word-of-Mouth or the Internet would require different specific measures. The combination of the broad measures (awareness, attitudes, and behavior) with the specific, task-related measures are intended to be strong tools for evaluation.

Individual task orders will describe additional performance measures and how each will be measured, as well as the specific numeric goals.